

## INTRODUCTION

### GLOBALIZATION AND DEIMPERIALIZATION

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language . . . In like manner, the beginner who has learned a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he assimilates the spirit of the new language and expresses himself freely in it only when he moves in it without recalling the old and when he forgets his native tongue.

KARL MARX, *THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE*

This project formulates an analytical framework—a geocolonial historical materialism—in order to develop a more adequate understanding of contemporary cultural forms, practices, and institutions in the formerly colonized world. As a whole, the book is in dialogue with three main currents of cultural studies: postcolonial studies, globalization studies, and the emerging field of Asian studies in Asia.

#### **The Field**

Postcolonial cultural studies is at an impasse. The central problem lies in its obsessive critique of the West, which bounds the field by the object of its own criticism. The result of this impasse is to put in doubt the

proposition that the world has reached the postcolonial era: if modern colonialism has been initiated and shaped by the West, then the postcolonial enterprise is still operating within the limits of colonial history and has not yet gone beyond a parasitic form of critique (Chen 1996). This book seeks to overcome the limits of the postcolonial critique by shifting the terrain of analysis to the question of deimperialization in the context of Asia. This turn toward Asia is suggested by the argument that only by multiplying the objects of identification and constructing alternative frames of reference can we undo the politics of resentment, which are too often expressed in the limited form of identity politics. Only by moving beyond such fixations can new forms of intellectual alliance be built and new solidarities forged in the new context of globalization.

If postcolonial studies is obsessed with the critique of the West and its transgressions, the discourses surrounding globalization tend to have shorter memories, thereby obscuring the relationships between globalization and the imperial and colonial past from which it emerged. This book puts the history of colonialism and imperialism back into globalization studies. In my view, without the trajectories of imperialism and colonialism, one cannot properly map the formation and conditions of globalization. Most importantly, the critical desire for a progressive form of globalization can be endorsed only if it puts the intent to deimperialize before all else. Globalization without deimperialization is simply a disguised reproduction of imperialist conquest. If this era of globalization is built on the assumption that to reconstruct a livable earth we can no longer allow any form of imperialism to prevail, then the movement toward deimperialization, starting with rethinking the wrongs and pains of past imperialist interventions, is the minimum requirement of the present.

The third area which the book addresses and intends to shape is the general field of Asian studies. In the past, this field was seen as having been largely constituted by studies done outside the geographical site of Asia, mainly in the United States and Europe. The emerging phenomenon of Asian studies in Asia seems to suggest that the reintegration of Asia requires a different sort of knowledge production. This is necessary to generate self-understanding in relation to neighboring spaces as well as the region as a whole, while at the same time removing the imperative

to understand ourselves through the imperialist eye. Interestingly, with the rise of Asia, we have suddenly found that we have been doing Asian studies in our own way, without using that name. The absence of the name, in fact, indicates our own lack of consciousness about Asia. If Asian studies is broadly defined as the field whose object of analysis is located in Asia, we will find that most of the research carried out in different parts of the region is in fact Asian studies. If one accepts this observation, it is clear that the largest number of practitioners of Asian studies are indeed in Asia, rather than outside the region — although, having learned from mainstream academics in the West to look down on the particularism of area studies, we have not admitted that we are a part of it. The challenge, however, cannot be simply to reclaim the territory of Asian studies from U.S. or European experiences, but to define Asian studies in Asia and its potential achievements. This book's objective is to offer some thoughts on how we might meet this challenge.

The epistemological implication of Asian studies in Asia is clear. If “we” have been doing Asian studies, Europeans, North Americans, Latin Americans, and Africans have also been doing studies in relation to their own living spaces. That is, Martin Heidegger was actually doing European studies, as were Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jürgen Habermas. European experiences were their system of reference. Once we recognize how extremely limited the current conditions of knowledge are, we learn to be humble about our knowledge claims. The universalist assertions of theory are premature, for theory too must be deimperialized.

### **An Argument**

This book makes the theoretical and political argument that decolonization and deimperialization could not have unfolded until the emergence of an era of globalization. By decolonization, I do not simply mean modes of anticolonialism that are expressed mainly through the building of a sovereign nation-state. Instead, decolonization is the attempt of the previously colonized to reflectively work out a historical relation with the former colonizer, culturally, politically, and economically. This can be a painful process involving the practice of self-critique, self-negation, and self-rediscovery, but the desire to form a less coerced and more reflexive and dignified subjectivity necessitates it.

If decolonization is mainly active work carried out on the terrain of the colonized, then deimperialization, which is no less painful and reflexive, is work that must be performed by the colonizer first, and then on the colonizer's relation with its former colonies. The task is for the colonizing or imperializing population to examine the conduct, motives, desires, and consequences of the imperialist history that has formed its own subjectivity. These two movements—decolonization and deimperialization—intersect and interact, though very unevenly. To put it simply, deimperialization is a more encompassing category and a powerful tool with which we can critically examine the larger historical impact of imperialism. There can be no compromise in these exercises, if the world is to move ahead peacefully.

My use of the word “globalization” does not imply the neoliberal assertion that imperialism is a historical ruin, or that now different parts of the world have become interdependent, interlinked, and mutually beneficiary. Instead, by globalization I refer to capital-driven forces which seek to penetrate and colonize all spaces on the earth with unchecked freedom, and that in so doing have eroded national frontiers and integrated previously unconnected zones. In this ongoing process of globalization, unequal power relations become intensified, and imperialism expresses itself in a new form.

Placing the modern history of East Asia at the center of our analysis, the book argues that the decolonization and deimperialization movements in the period immediately after the Second World War were interrupted by the formation of a cold-war structure. Only after the cold war eased, creating the condition of possibility for globalization, did decolonization return with the full force of something long repressed. But unlike the immediate postwar period, this moment of decolonization requires us to confront and explore the legacies and ongoing tensions of the cold war—an imperative I designate as “de-cold war.” In fact, these three movements—decolonization, deimperialization, and de-cold war—have to proceed in concert, precisely because colonization, imperialism, and the cold war have become one and the same historical process. Unless these three movements can proceed together—that is, unless the deimperialization movement is globalized in both the former colonies and the current and former imperial centers—events like those of September 11, 2001, are bound to happen again and again.

## A Narrative

Let me slow down and unpack this abstract proposition. It has now become clear that one crucial aspect of globalization is actually regional integration. The African Union, the Latin American Integration Association, the European Union, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are expressions of this regionalism. This process was accelerated in the aftermath of September 11, as groups in various parts of the world came together to oppose U.S. imperial desire. In East Asia, however, regional history has prevented a coherent framework from emerging; as a result, regional integration here has proceeded relatively slowly.

Starting in the middle of the nineteenth century, the “Chinese empire”<sup>1</sup> at the center of East Asia began to collapse, and the Sinocentric system of trade and tribute—which had been a relatively coherent world order—started to erode.<sup>2</sup> The periphery (Japan) sought to replace the center (China), significantly altering power relations in the region. But the decline of the feudal tribute system did not end deep-seated historical tensions in the region. Although the political structure of East Asia has been reshaped along the lines of the modern nation-state, the dense history of the region has prevented it from complete or rapid disintegration. The current configuration of big and small nation-states in the region, for example, closely mirrors the historical arrangement of suzerain and vassal states that existed before the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> Simply put, the current international order in East Asia is a reconfiguration of the old Sinocentric structure combined with the so-called “modern” system of the nation-state.<sup>4</sup> This heterogeneous and internally contradictory historical experience complicates the existing narrative of colonialism.

The mainland Chinese territory, for instance, was never colonized, but it was split up, and parts of it were ceded or leased to Western imperialist forces. Note that I am making a distinction between colony and concession, which have different legal statuses; more importantly, the distinction implies different forms of governing and governed subjectivities. The first real colony in the modern history of Northeast Asia was arguably Hong Kong, which was ceded to England in 1842 after the shameful Opium War.<sup>5</sup> Japan annexed Okinawa in 1872 and occupied Taiwan in 1895, after the First Sino-Japanese War. At the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Korea became a Japanese protectorate; it was formally ab-

sorbed into the Japanese empire in 1910.<sup>6</sup> Although in 1911 the first republic in Asia was established in mainland China, Taiwan, still occupied by Japan, was not part of it. Then in 1932, the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo was established in the northeast part of China.<sup>7</sup> The Japanese officially invaded China in 1937, which marked the beginning of an eight-year war that became part of the Second World War, ending in 1945 with the defeat of Japan and its Axis partners. In retrospect, the difficulty with Northeast Asian regional integration is partially caused by the discomfort the region's population felt under first the long-term dominance of the Chinese empire, and then the strain of prewar Japanese imperialism and colonialism.

Here I am making another analytical distinction between colonialism and imperialism. The Japanese state's operations in Taiwan and Korea were colonialism proper, but in China, which was never colonized or completely occupied in the way that Taiwan and Korea were, Japan's involvement is best understood as imperialism. Subjects in the colonies were directly governed by the foreign regime, and unlike foreign concessions such as Hong Kong, Macao, and parts of Shanghai (in an earlier period), the colonies of Taiwan and Korea were established without any indication that colonial rule would end. This implies a completely different condition of life. To put it in abstract terms, colonialism is a deepening of imperialism. Whereas colonialism is necessarily a form of imperialism, imperialism is not necessarily a form of colonialism. (To echo the discussion in the previous section, deimperialization is theoretically a much wider movement than decolonization.)

To mobilize the populace in the colonies for what was called the Great East Asian War, the Japanese colonial state launched an "imperialization of the subject" (*kominka*) movement in 1937 to transform the colonized people in Taiwan and Korea into its imperial subjects (Chou 1996). While imperialization was aimed at further assimilating the colonized subject, it was also a process which took place at the imperial center, as the center's own subjects became imperialized.<sup>8</sup> This is a critical point in my argument. In conventional usage, assimilation is thought to be the process by which the colonizer attempts to transform the colonized, to initiate the colonized subject into a more civilized way of life. In this view, assimilation is a one-way street: the colonized learns to become like the colonizer, never the reverse, as if the empire's own subject has nothing

to do with the colony, and the colonial machine need not do anything to adjust to new situations resulting from the incorporation of the conquered territories. The fact that imperialization is a double process, one that takes place in the imperial center as well as in the colonies, has only recently begun to be realized. Much recent historical research, in particular the work of Catherine Hall (2002), has forcefully demonstrated that the identity of the empire is directly shaped by its relation with the colony. In light of this discussion, the Japanese *kominka* movement can now be read as one instance of a historical practice, one that allows us to foreground the problematic of this double process. If this theoretical move stands, it raises a more burning question: what would be the consequences if deimperialization did not happen? When the empire is eroded and the decolonization process gathers momentum, we expect deimperialization to occur in both the imperial country and the colony, but the experience in East Asia after the Second World War has shown us that this process can be interrupted. As we proceed, readers will see that the notion of deimperialization is central to this book. A detailed analysis of this problematic will be presented in chapter 4.

In 1945, when Japan was finally defeated, the deimperialization process had just begun, but Japan was then occupied for seven years by the Allies, who put General Douglas MacArthur in charge of the country, and its status shifted quickly from that of colonizer to colonized. This new condition prevented Japan from doing the reflexive work of deimperialization within its own territory and from grappling with its historical relations with its former colonies (Korea, Taiwan, and others) or its protectorate (Manchukuo).<sup>9</sup> The Korean War, which broke out in 1950, entailed not only a bloody fight among the Koreans themselves, but also the partitioning of Korea into two states.<sup>10</sup> By the end of the Korean War in 1956, a stable cold-war structure in East Asia was in place. The cold-war segregation of the region went on for two decades, until the Chinese mainland began to reopen to the world in the late 1970s. It was during these difficult cold-war times that Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, and Taiwan became U.S. protectorates. As I see it, one of the lasting legacies of this period is the installation of the anticommunism–pro-Americanism structure in the capitalist zone of East Asia, whose overwhelming consequences are still with us today.

First, this structure produced an image of the communists as evil,



which supplied rhetorical justification for an alliance of antidemocratic forces. The othering of the imaginary communist is the precise historical reason why the suppression of grass-roots democratic movements by authoritarian military regimes and right-wing governments was strongly supported by U.S. neoimperialists. According to the ideological fantasy generated by this structure, being antigovernment was equivalent to being communist. The authoritarian state could therefore legitimately intimidate and arrest dissidents, and the critical tradition of leftist thought in the region was effectively discontinued.

Second, energies for deimperializing Japan and decolonizing Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, and Korea (and arguably Hong Kong and Macao) were depoliticized, postponed, and channeled into economic development, where the conditions for thinking reflexively about the former relations between the colonizer and the colonized were prohibited. Such critical work, apparently, would have given the communist enemy an opportunity to break up the U.S.-led democratic alliance. Addressing the historical question of colonialism was therefore forbidden.

Third, the momentum required to rediscover and rebuild subjectivity in the former colonies after the Second World War and the Korean War was lost. Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, and South Korea became U.S. protectorates, but since subjectivities in East Asia were so heavily colored by the favor of American influences the countries might more accurately be described as American subcolonies. The United States has become the inside of East Asia, and it is constitutive of a new East Asian subjectivity. In short, the cold war carried within itself moments of disruption and continuity, whereby U.S. neoimperialism both disrupted and continued Japanese colonialism.<sup>11</sup> The cold war mediated old colonialism and new imperialism.

The Vietnam War reinforced the anticommunism-pro-Americanism structure. The defeat of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, however, did not sufficiently push the U.S. antiwar movement into a full-fledged deimperialization movement at home. (If it had, U.S. militarism would probably not have increased in the following decades.) The defeat in Vietnam helped consolidate cold-war anticommunism, which did not soften until China announced its open-door policy in the late 1970s. Anticommunism entered a new stage in the late 1980s, when the collapse of socialism and the triumph of capitalism was heralded around the globe. This was when



the rhetoric of globalization began to take off, and by the early 1990s, “globalization” had become a buzzword in the academy.

By now, it has become clear that during the cold-war era, everyone lived in a divided world. In contrast, the world today is being molded by various attempts to replace the anticommunism–pro-Americanism structure with one of globalization. Masquerading behind the rhetoric of “the end of ideology” or the “third road,” these attempts, which are being put forward primarily by neoliberals based in Europe and the United States, are of course heavily charged with ideology and intent on removing barriers that prevent capital from conquering all the planet’s “free markets.” Nevertheless, capital-driven, neoliberal globalization has created a new condition of possibility in Northeast Asia. For example, once mutually exclusive zones now permit exchanges of people and goods. Travel between mainland China and Taiwan has been allowed since the late 1980s, and limited visits between North and South Korea began in 2000. Regional reconciliation is beginning. More importantly, thanks to the lessening of cold-war tensions and the drive for globalization, democratic opposition movements in places like South Korea and Taiwan have found more sympathy for their legitimate grievances in the international community.

This postponed period of political democratization is indeed the beginning of a new process of decolonization. It is made up of movements that were first organized to fight against U.S.-backed authoritarian states, and later struggled to decolonize their countries by reopening the history of prewar colonialism. Supporting the emergence of opposition political movements has been the nativist movement. To use Ashis Nandy’s (1983) words, this is a movement defined as a “loss and recovery of the self.” Rediscovering traditions and rewriting national histories are the dominant forms of expression of this movement. I would argue that the Korean cultural revitalization movement and the Taiwanese nativization (*běntúhuà*) movement, which began in the 1970s and 1980s and are continuing, have been the cultural and social basis of the political democratization movements;<sup>12</sup> and precisely because of nativization’s ethnic-based politics, these democratic movements are running into trouble today. Chapter 2 deals with this issue in depth.

But in the new context of globalization, the complexity of decolonization goes far beyond the anticolonial, national independence movements of an earlier era. Current decolonization movements must confront the

conditions left behind by the cold-war era. It has become impossible to criticize the United States in Taiwan because the decolonization movement, which had to address Taiwan's relation with Japan, was never able to fully emerge from the postwar period; the Chinese communists were successfully constructed as the evil other by the authoritarian Kuomintang regime; and the United States became the only conceivable model of political organization and the telos of progress. Consequently, it is the Chinese mainlanders (those still in China as well as those who moved to Taiwan in 1949) who have, since the mid-1980s, become the figures against whom the ethnic-nationalist brand of the Taiwanese nativist movement has organized itself. In contrast, the Americans and Japanese are seen as benefactors, responsible for Taiwan's prosperity.

Despite these political constraints, the colonial history of the Japanese occupation has become a booming field of study in Taiwan since the 1990s. Although there are tremendous problems with the way colonial history is being studied, divided as it is into separatist and integrationist lines of research, the project of decolonization in Taiwan is under way, however limited and incomplete it might seem. Like Taiwan, South Korea has started to work out its colonial relations with Japan (on such issues as the "comfort women," history textbooks, and popular television dramas jointly produced by Japanese and Koreans) and with the United States (on issues like the removal of military bases). The publication of the *Modern History of Three East Asian Countries* (2005), written and edited by scholars from Korea, China, and Japan, is a further indication of South Korea's important role in the regional reconciliation process.<sup>13</sup> Compared with their Taiwanese counterparts, South Korean democratic forces have a much stronger presence in civil society, but in what direction and how far the decolonization movement in Taiwan and South Korea can push remain unanswered questions.

The complexity evident in Taiwan's and Korea's history is manifested even more fully in Japan's dual status as both colonizer and colonized. As colonizer, Japan has to resolve its guilt for the damage it caused its neighbors by the imperialist Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere project. As colonized, Japan has to work out its contradictory attitudes of resentment and gratitude toward the United States. In a way, the entire intellectual history of Japan since the Second World War can be read as a critique of the self, specifically the complicity between the population and the

prewar militarist state. Maruyama Masao's account of the Japanese fascist personality is devoted to precisely this topic (Maruyama 1963). But, once again conditioned by the cold war, the internal configuration of political forces in Japan — with the left and right wings successfully checking each other's ambitions — has prevented critical intellectual circles from dealing with Japan's former colonies and conquered lands. The Left projected its romantic longing onto China but became confused and disillusioned by the Cultural Revolution. The Right projected its colonial nostalgia onto Taiwan (seen as the real China as well as a shadow Japan) and South Korea.

The moment of “decolonialization” (this is how the activist thinker Mutō Ichiyō refers to what I have described as deimperialization), when Japanese critical intellectuals finally took up Japan's imperialist relations with its former colonies, only came into being in the 1990s. This moment first concerned itself with the issue of the comfort women, but in the late 1990s, it expanded into a series of heated debates on a variety of issues (Hanasaki 2000). Today, critical circles in Japan are also actively dealing with their country's relations with the United States through issues such as the Okinawa military base, responses to September 11, and participation in Asian peace movements. But the U.S. question, in my view, remains the most difficult challenge for mainland Japanese intellectuals to work through.<sup>14</sup>

We began our narrative with a discussion of the Chinese empire, and now we come back to it. After a century of imperialist invasion, the Chinese socialist revolution reunified most of China's sovereign territories.<sup>15</sup> However, due to the century-long accumulation of anti-imperialist sentiment, the modern Chinese national identity can be said to have been formed by its relation with the former imperialist countries of the West, a relation which has still not been resolved. Western imperialism has long been part of the Chinese psyche and, in my view, will only be adequately addressed when China has been fully modernized.

Within Chinese history, the 1945–49 civil war between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang, or KMT) was in fact a struggle between different versions of modernity, or — looked at from another perspective — between different strategies of decolonization and deimperialization. Taiwan's move toward capitalism on its road to modernity was cemented in 1949 when it became a KMT-

ruled U.S. protectorate, whereas mainland China's pursuit of socialist modernity was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union. If we understand socialist revolution as a form of decolonization opposed to capitalist expansionism and conducted in the name of class politics, then an important episode in the story of Chinese decolonization was the moment of its third worldism. Chinese solidarity with the colonized third world, which began in the context of the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, was a crucial step in the opening up and reformulation of the self-centered worldview found throughout the history of the Chinese empire. For instance, from the 1950s to the late 1970s, an intellectual movement engaged in the translation of literatures from all over the third world was able to break out of the binary opposition between China and the West, successfully showing how such conventional limitations could be overcome. Although the third worldist decolonization era was short-lived, its long-term impact on the contemporary Chinese intellectual scene cannot be underestimated.<sup>16</sup>

China's reopening to the world in the late 1970s was an important condition for the formation of neoliberal globalization, especially in East Asia. Inside China, Deng Xiaoping's southern tour (*nánxún*) in 1992 officially marked the country's market turn, and the changes brought about by this shift have only escalated since then. Much like the immediate postwar era, when the countries of the East Asian capitalist block put their full energies into economic development, China is now in a turbulent mood, and economic development has become a national—if not nationalist—movement. The profit-seeking drive is indeed a form of redemption, payback for the history of lack that China experienced from the 1950s onward. If—as happened in Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, and South Korea—the release of repressed energy for decolonization and deimperialization coincides with economic prosperity, this may be the moment for China to take up the historical question of imperialism again.

The improvement of the Chinese economy has not only put China back in the center of global power, it has facilitated imaginings—both positive and negative—of regional reintegration in Northeast Asia. Although it is true that a new regional structure is forming as the center of gravity in Asia shifts, it would be ridiculous and unacceptable to understand the situation as simply the return of the old Chinese empire in the form of an updated tributary system. Nevertheless, the view of China as a

threat has been widespread and deeply felt in other parts of East Asia and is being reinforced by the Chinese leadership's own slogan of a "peaceful rise," which was an attempt to assuage anxiety in the region. These two sentiments—the hope for regional integration and the fear of China—seem to have resulted from the overlapping of two moments in history. It is still too early to know precisely what the new regional structure will look like, but I think that critical circles in the region first need to recognize that the relative sizes of these countries is significant, and then learn to work out equitable mechanisms of interaction, including the distribution of responsibilities, big or small.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, if regional integration is to be pushed forward, it is precisely at this moment that a reflexive politics of decolonization and deimperialization needs to be formed. This, as I see it, is the major challenge and responsibility facing critical intellectuals in China and in other parts of Asia. For critical Chinese intellectuals (I count myself one), the political difficulty of this work is twofold: on the one hand, there is the real sentiment of suffering that is the legacy of Western and Japanese imperialist invasions, and the corresponding reactive dangers inherent in the presently emerging Chinese triumphalism; on the other hand, there is the deeper necessity to reflexively take up China's empire (if not imperialist) status in relation to the rest of Asia, which—though from an earlier historical moment—has generated lasting hegemonic pressure on the whole of East Asia. The point is not so much to debate, on the Chinese mainland and beyond, whether China is or will become the next imperial power, but to rework the historically grounded ideals formulated in the third worldist moment of internationalism, or perhaps even earlier, in the moment of Sun Yat-sen's Great Asianism.<sup>18</sup> These ideals would serve as a reflexive mechanism to challenge the scenario in which the Chinese empire is pitted against the American one, in what would surely be a disastrous reproduction of the imperial desire. The severe competition for global power would bring China back to the old binary logic of China and the West, and Sinocentrism would once again cause China to ignore the rest of the world.

### **Implications**

This condensed and partial narrative of colonization and decolonization in the modern history of East Asia has been an attempt to locate exactly

where in the process we currently find ourselves. Although as critical intellectuals we would like to imagine that the global decolonization project is over and done with—especially if one recalls that Fanon teased out the problems of decolonization decades ago in his seminal texts *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967 [1952]) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968 [1961])—contemporary East Asian experiences contradict that naive hope. We are actually at an initial and critical stage of decolonization and deimperialization, which was made possible only by the arrival of the so-called post-cold-war era of globalization. It is initial because these reflexive movements have not yet progressed very far. It is critical because the directions these movements might take are not yet fixed, and the movements could quickly fall into the traps Fanon pointed to.<sup>19</sup> Unless the decolonizers make the effort to sort out the myriad complexities of the situation, we could see a return to imperialism, as manifested by the support for U.S. military expansionism that various East Asian states extended in the wake of September 11.

If this is the picture in East Asia, where decolonization and deimperialization have just begun, what is the situation in the rest of the world? Have the former colonies in other parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America really decolonized? Have current and former empires in Western Europe and North America really deimperialized? I am not a global historian and cannot answer these questions with precision, but my hunch is that in this regard East Asian experiences are not at all exceptional. In 1957 Albert Memmi made a clear demand: “The disclosures having been made, the cruelty of the truth having been admitted, the relationship of Europe with her former colonies must be reconsidered. Having abandoned the colonial framework, it is important for all of us to discover a new way of living with that relationship” (Memmi 1991 [1957], 146). Half a century later, it seems that neither side of the colonial divide has sufficiently responded to Memmi’s call to work out a way to live with the historical legacy of colonialism. In Southeast and South Asia, decolonization in the form of national independence has been achieved, but the countries’ relations with their former colonizers have not yet been properly addressed. And the imperial powers involved—England, France, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and the United States—have not deimperialized themselves enough to be able to acknowledge the harm they did to these regions. I believe that critical studies of experiences in Asia might be able to offer a

new view of global history, and to pose a different set of questions. This is the true potential of Asia as method.

September 11 and its aftermath clearly show the range of sentiments — from admiration to resentment — that exists around the world in relation to the American empire. The reactionary popular support that George W. Bush's military invasion of Iraq initially enjoyed within the United States makes clear that the country has never gone through a deimperialization movement. And even though the coordinated global movements against the U.S. imperialist invasion of Iraq in 2003 were among the first of their kind, their nascency is also an indication that the global decolonization and deimperialization movements have just begun. The U.S. hegemony in the capitalist bloc after the Second World War has, since the end of the cold war, extended to the entire globe. Not only have third-world spaces in Asia, Latin America, and Africa been colonized politically, economically, and culturally by the U.S. military empire, but so have Europe and the former European empires. It is then the meeting of the colonizer (the United States) and the colonized (the rest of the world) that has made September 11 a truly global event. If this observation has any validity, then the call for a global decolonization and deimperialization movement is urgent.

At this juncture, Asian regional integration is strategically central. But this integration cannot be understood simply in regional terms; it has to be placed in the context of global politics since September 11. It is a regionalism, but also an internationalism and a globalism. If all of Asia can be integrated as other regions have started to do through organizations such as the African Union, the European Union, and the Association of South East Asian Nations, that integration would increase the likelihood that the global balance of power vis-à-vis the U.S. military empire could shift. At this historical moment, the global formation of regional blocs seems necessary to prevent the United States from continuing to abuse its position as the single superpower. Without such critical recognition and practices, regionalization is about nothing more than making a seat for oneself at the table of free-trade negotiations. If maintaining regional balances is a significant step toward a peaceful transformation of the world, the integration of Asia is a global demand.

Iraq is in Asia, in the center of West Asia. Imagine for a moment that an Asian Union existed to resist intervention from outside: would it have



been quite so easy for Bush, with his imperialist desire, to arrogantly invade Iraq? But to counter neoliberal globalization, a global decolonization and deimperialization movement must first be carried out. If the colonized and colonizer do not address the history of imperialism and colonialism together, it is impossible to build solidarity among the so-called global multitudes.<sup>20</sup> If the world is not to go on as a theater of imperial conquests and rivalries, then deimperialization is a necessary intellectual and political commitment.